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A radio talk by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered through WRC and 43 other radio stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, August 4, 1931. ★ AUG 14 1931
U. S. Department of Agriculture

Hello Folks: When I was a boy I often heard the oldtimers in the neighborhood where I lived talking about "Dog-days." You shouldn't go swimming in "dog-days", but you should cut brambles, sassafras and persimmon sprouts during "dog-days" if you wanted the roots to die. On the farm August stood out as the month following harvest - the month when we cleaned up around the barn and along the fence rows, when we mowed the ragweeds in the pasture, when we repaired gates and fences, patched the roof of the smokehouse, cleaned up the orchard, removed the old raspberry canes, gave the spring and the springhouse a good cleaning, made a new watering trough for the livestock, and did a thousand and one odd jobs around the place.

"Just as soon as harvest is over," my mother would say, "we will do this or we will do that," and she always had a long list of jobs ready for my father and me to do just as soon as the last load of hay was in the barn and the wheat and oats stacked. I suppose if I had lived in the South when I was a boy this annual cleanup would not have occurred until after the cotton was picked and ginned.

Invariably my mother's list included a general cleanup of the lawn, the flower borders and the vegetable garden. We didn't have a lawn mower in those days but my father was one of those oldtime artists with a moving scythe. Our lawn was seldom cut during harvest time, and as a result there was often a growth of six or eight inches of bluegrass upon it by the time harvest was over. First came the job of grinding the scythe blade, Dad doing the grinding and I on the handle of the grindstone. Did any of you, in your boyhood days, ever turn an old-fashioned grindstone? I mean turn it for an hour or two at a time when you wanted to be playing with the other boys of the neighborhood.

While my father was cutting the grass it was my job to get the weeds out of the flower borders and the rose bed. Then came the raking of the grass from the lawn and bringing wheelbarrow load after wheelbarrow load of compost from the barn lot and spreading it around the roses that grow in a border along one whole side of the lawn. How well do I remember some of those oldtime varieties of roses. There was General Jacqueminot - "General Jack" we called it - Hermosa, Damask, Clotilda Soupert, Paul Neyron and others. There was always an abundance of rose flowers in our yard during the summer and early fall, and this was mainly due to the care that my mother gave her roses.

Now, folks, I did not start out with the intention of giving you a talk on roses but I just want to remark that if you do want roses in your flower garden that now is a good time to make your plans and prepare a place to plant them later this season or early next spring. The same will apply to the planting of small fruits, and by the way, I wonder how many of you grow strawberries, raspberries, blackberries or other small fruits for home use.

(over)

When the first settlers came to America they found certain native wild fruits growing, and among these was the blueberry. For fully 300 years the people living in certain parts of the country have gathered wild blueberries and have made them into pies and puddings, and eaten them fresh as a dessert. It is only within the past 20 years or so that we have paid any particular attention to the improvement of this wonderful fruit, but with the creation of new varieties once started progress has been rapid and we now have a plentiful supply of fruits of the improved varieties of blueberries on our markets. Workers in the United States Department of Agriculture have been responsible for these results. Commercial growers have done their part by trying out the new varieties and propagating them on a commercial scale.

At present our markets are well supplied in season with the fruit of the best improved varieties of blueberries, but under favorable conditions there are possibilities of growing blueberries in the home fruit garden for home use the same as raspberries, blackberries or dewberries. Of course you understand the blueberries require an acid soil and are not adapted for growing on limestone soils but on sandy soils and those that are easily changed to an acid condition by the plowing under of oak leaves or by the use of chemicals. I believe, however, that there is quite an opportunity for the growing of the improved varieties of blueberries for home use, especially in the New England States, New Jersey southward along the Atlantic coast to North Carolina, also in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. The improved varieties of the blueberry produce berries that are much larger than those of the wild sorts and they are most excellent for eating fresh with cream and sugar as a dessert. I believe many of you might be interested in getting a box of these improved blueberries on the market and trying them. Perhaps some of you live in sections where blueberries can be grown; possibly you are already cultivating this delicious fruit for home use.

Dewberries and strawberries are the standard small fruits for the southern states, while raspberries, blackberries and strawberries are most dependable for the North. Under favorable soil and moisture conditions strawberries can be planted during the summer, but all of the cane fruits like raspberries and blackberries should be planted in the fall or the spring. It is a good plan to start now to prepare the soil for them, and I believe that more people living on farms would find it to their advantage to plant a few berries for home use. I want to make it clear, however, that I am not advocating the planting of small fruits for the market, although that might pay in some cases, but I am advocating their planting in order to supply the home table with delicious fruits especially at times when other fruits may not be plentiful.

Now I do not want to suggest anything that would deprive you boys, old or young, of your chance to do a little fishing or camping after the rush of the summer's work is over, but I do believe that the garden and the surroundings of the farm home should have a little extra attention and cleaning up about this time of the year. In spite of the best of general care, a certain amount of picking up and trimming up is needed following the busy season in order to maintain a neat and attractive appearance around the farm home.